



If you could look five years into the future and change one thing would you be interested? Would you believe what you saw? Would you act on your new found knowledge? It could put you at a great advantage, or you could really mess things up.

A Moment in Time

by Bob Weaver

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A MOMENT IN TIME

B O B W E A V E R

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Making New Friends?	5
A Dinner to Remember.....	8
What He’s Talking About	13
Jerry	22
The Big Day	27
Answers Bring More Questions.....	31
Why Not?	37
Setting It All Up.....	40
Lying and Flying	47
Getting a Look Around.....	54
The Green Door	59
A Seer, a Doctor and Lord Osman	64
Getting Good at Lying.....	68
Examining My Future.....	78
Hard Work Pays Off	91
Going Forward	98
Things Can Change in a Moment.....	109
Spies and Murder—around Here?	113
This Is like a Plot to a Movie	124

An Exhilarating and Alarming Thought	129
A Bad Day Comes My Way	135
My Bad Day Gets Worse	143
Good News and Guilt	148
Ain't No Sunshine	154
Things Are Getting Weird.....	158
You Are My Sunshine	162
Cloudy with Despair to Follow	163
What Now?	181
Turning the Tables	186
The Choice.....	189
The Hour of Power	233

Introduction

The question: *What would you give to be able to have an opportunity to look five years into the future and the ability to change one moment? What if I told you I could allow you a sneak peek into the next five years of your life and you could choose one moment, one action, to change? Would you be interested?*

“What a crazy question!” I thought, but he pressed the issue and asked again, “Well, would you be interested?”

“In changing my future?”

“Yes,” he said.

“That’s crazy. No one can see into the future.”

“You may be right, but you still have not answered my question. *Would you be interested?*”

“Well, yeah, of course—anyone would be interested in changing some things for something better. You would be crazy not to, but then you might have to be a little crazy thinking you could change the future in the first place,” I said.

“Okay”, he said. “So I’m a little crazy, but I’m here to tell you that this works. I know firsthand because I have looked into my own future and decided to change one moment, and it’s going to change my whole life.”

“Okay,” I said, glad to end such a ridiculous conversation with this guy I hardly knew.

We had met earlier that morning as we were paired up in a local golf tournament sponsored by the company we both worked for. Neither of us had a partner for the eighteen-hole scramble, so the leaders of the tournament asked if we would mind pairing up. It was for a good cause, and it would only be for a few hours, so I said, “Sure. Why not?”

It was an uneventful morning for the first couple of hours. We talked about our specific areas of work, how long we had been with the company, and so forth, and then we moved to our personal lives, our families, hobbies, hopes, and dreams.

That's when the conversation took an unusual turn. This guy started talking about sci-fi stuff, and being somewhat of an enthusiast myself, I went along. We were both into the current zombie craze, so we talked at length about the zombie shows we liked and allowed a little free thinking about the possibility of such an event, what would have caused it, how anybody would survive, and if it meant the end of humanity or if they would find a cure in the last moments before all life was wiped out.

From there we went from life on other planets to the possibility of time travel, and that's where he got a little bit weird. I was enjoying the conversation from a theoretical and interesting point of view, something you just talk about with friends when you let your imagination run wild and have a little fun, but this guy started talking about things as though they were factual. Thinking the guy was a little off, I slowed my conversation and said, "Man I need to concentrate on my game a little more." The conversation died down a bit as we focused more on the game and we actually ended up winning third place, so that meant waiting around for the awards ceremony. Third place got us each dinner reservations for two at a local steakhouse—not bad since my company paid my entrance fee.

While we were waiting, the conversation started up again with my new friend, this time talking about some of the regrets in his life and how if he could go back, he would love to change some things. I was with him on that point and I told him so. All people have things in their past that they would love to be able to go back and change, but what's done is done. Hindsight, of course, is always 20/20. "But the future" he said, "has not happened yet. I'm not talking about traveling there—I just want to catch a glimpse of it."

"You mean like through a fortune teller?" I asked.

"No, nothing so mumbo-jumbo as that," he said. "I'm talking about something that has some real science behind it. You know, real laboratories

A Moment in Time

and guys with white coats and all. Well, listen—I've got to go and pick up my kids. It's my weekend to have them with me, and my ex gets in a really bad mood if I'm late to pick them up. Just think about it, and I'll give you a call next week to see if you're interested and want any more information. If you do, I'll lay it all out for you. Talk to you later."

With that he got up and walked out the door. I sat there for a few moments with my head kind of in a spin. *That guy was really weird*, I thought. It was then I looked down and noticed that he had left his steakhouse voucher on the table. He was long gone by the time I noticed it, so I figured I would have to get in touch with him at work next week and give it to him. To be truthful, I had hoped not to see the guy again and secretly wondered if he had left them there as a way to ensure that we would talk.

After a while I left the clubhouse and headed home. I had a full day planned that included finishing mowing the lawn and catching my youngest son's T-ball game with the rest of the family before grilling some burgers on the grill. When I got home I was pleasantly surprised to find that Mike, my older boy, had already mowed most of the backyard and had left me just a little to do out front. I was putting my golf clubs in the garage when he stepped into the garage with a "Did you notice that I mowed the backyard?" look on his face.

"Hey, Dad" he said. "Could I have ten bucks to go to the movies with Susan?"

"Susan from church?" I asked.

"Yeah. A couple of kids are going to the 3:45 showing of that new monster movie, and I asked if she would like to go and she said yes."

"You asked her out and didn't have any money?"

"Well, I thought you wouldn't mind helping a guy out if he helped you mow the lawn."

"What did your mom say?"

“She said it was okay with her if you said okay.”

“What about your little brother’s game?”

“I already asked him and he said it was okay, because Susan helps teach his Sunday school class and he likes her.”

“Well, I can’t argue with that. She’s a nice girl, so you make sure you’re a gentleman and be nice to her. Do you hear?”

“Yes, Dad. I will.”

I gave him the money and went in to change my clothes. Walking through the kitchen, I saw my wife, Sara. She looked as good to me as the first time I saw her almost twenty years ago. I know that some people seem to fall out of love, but we still shared a passion for each other that makes me glad to be around her.

“Did you get hit up by your son for some money?” she asked.

“Yep. What do you think about him taking a girl to the movies?” I asked her.

“Well, I think it’s only normal. You and I were going to the movies with each other at his age, and besides, I really like Susan. She comes from a good family and I think she’s a nice girl.”

“Okay by me,” I said. “Well, I’d better get to the rest of the yard. It would have been nice if he’d done all of it, but I’ll take what I can get.”

The rest of the weekend went by rather quickly. Sara and I moved from kid-related activity to church commitments to Sunday afternoon naps, which had become a staple for us in the last few years. I remember laughing at my parents when they took naps, but now I understand the need for some down time just to recharge your batteries so that you can do everything you need to do. And so we napped.

Making New Friends?

The weekend was over and I headed back to work, the office gossip pool already telegraphing to everyone within earshot that I was the big winner of this past Saturday's charity tournament and that I had won some humongous prize. There were jokes about taking them with me when I went to the Bahamas. I quickly put things straight and let them know that while I had indeed won, it was third place and that the prize was no farther away than a trip to a local steakhouse.

When the laughter died down we all got to work, but my mind went to my tournament partner's steakhouse voucher I had in my pocket. Maybe I could just send it to his department by in-house messenger—that way I would not be drawn into any more lengthy crazy talk about changing the future. I decided I couldn't do that since it would seem rude, and besides, the whole discussion, as crazy as it was, had piqued my curiosity. It was all probably some big joke anyway—you know, the kind when someone says something ridiculous just to get some attention or to get a laugh. Anyway, what could it hurt?

When I got to my desk I shot him an email to tell him about having his voucher and asked if I could stop by at lunch to give it to him. He said he had a lunch meeting and would not be back until later that afternoon and that he would just stop by my desk on his way back to his office later that afternoon. I agreed and then filled my time with work.

In the back of my mind, however, I was still thinking about his question: "What if I told you I could allow you a sneak peek into the next five years of your life and you could choose one moment, one action to change—would you be interested?" That would be awesome. To be able to know what was going to happen in your life before it happened and to have the ability to change one thing about your life—the possibilities were running amuck in my brain. The ability to change a bad decision into a good one, the ability to see some catastrophe and avoid it altogether—on and on my mind went

until I had to say to myself, *Stop with this nonsense and get back to work.* And so I did.

The afternoon passed by quickly and I was involved in a project when I heard someone say, "There's my partner." I looked up, and it was Jerry. He had finally gotten clear of his long lunch and had made his way to my desk. "I thought maybe you had forgotten me or something," I said.

"Forget you? No way buddy. I need that voucher to take my wife out to dinner this week," he said. I handed him the voucher and told him it was nice golfing with him at the tournament on Saturday and to get to know him a little better. As he was leaving he turned and said, "Hey, my wife and I haven't lived here very long and have not made many friends. How about you and your wife and me and mine go out for dinner later this week and use our vouchers for a steak dinner?"

Well, my wife Sara, was always telling me I needed to be more outgoing and try making new friends, so I said I would check with her and get back with him tomorrow.

That night I went home kicking myself all the way home for taking up another night of my already-busy schedule. I got home and mentioned to Sara the invitation from my new golfing buddy, and you would think it was the greatest opportunity we had ever been given. "That's a wonderful idea!" she said. "What night?"

"Well, I'll have to let him know tomorrow at work and see what night he had in mind, but are you sure you really want to go? I hardly know the guy."

"Sure, I do!" she said. "I always like making new friends." She did have an outgoing personality, the kind of person who never met a stranger.

"Okay. I'll tell Jerry tomorrow."

The next day I walked over into Jerry's section of our building and knocked on his open door. He looked up.

"I talked to Sara, my wife, and she said that we would love to go out."

A Moment in Time

“That’s great.” Jerry said. “What night is good for you guys?”

“Tomorrow night is good if that works for you guys.”

“Tomorrow night it is—how about 6:30?” Jerry asked.

“It’s a date,” I replied. We’ll see you there.” I walked out of his office toward my department all the time wondering what would come of all this. Jerry hadn’t said anything more about the question he first asked me on Saturday. Maybe it was all just a joke after all. *Well, one night at dinner couldn’t hurt, I said to myself. It’s not like we’re going on a trip with them. One dinner, and if they’re not interesting, then no harm and no foul—and who knows? They might be a really nice couple. Time will tell.*

A Dinner to Remember

The next night we arrived at the steakhouse about 6:30, and Jerry and his wife were waiting there for us in the lobby. With introductions made, we headed toward the front desk and were seated near the front of the restaurant. It was a unique layout because you could see right into the kitchen, where the staff was preparing our food. The service was great and the food was first-rate. We all got our dinners prepared just the way we asked for them to be, and the evening was turning out to be very enjoyable as our wives found they had a lot of the same interests. I even enjoyed getting to know Jerry a little better.

As we concluded our evening and were leaving the restaurant, we all agreed to do it again. No word, though, about the question Jerry had asked me when we first met, so I reasoned he must have just been pulling my leg and let it go at that. On the drive home Sara mentioned again how much she enjoyed herself and said that she and Cindy, Jerry's wife, were planning on getting together for lunch one day next week to get better acquainted. Sounded good to me as Sara always loved meeting new people, so if it made her happy, then it made me happy. I was a little more of a recluse, and that was why she insisted we go out tonight so I might make another friend—and here she was the one who had added to her list of friends. As for me and Jerry, well, he seemed okay. At least my impression of him had improved from our first encounter, so I figured, *We'll see*.

The next day back at the office, who showed up at my desk? None other than Jerry himself. "Hey, buddy. Cindy and I had a great time last night and the wives seemed to hit it off, so I wanted to say thanks for getting together with us."

"No problem," I said. "We had a great time too. We'll have to do it again sometime soon." We talked a little more, and then he told me he had a tee time for Saturday morning at 7:30 and asked if I would like to go. "Count me in," I said and he left.

A Moment in Time

The days went by with work and family, the usual stuff, and along came Saturday morning with the alarm waking me and me saying to myself, *With church on Sunday morning and Saturday my only day to sleep in, why did I agree to going golfing this early?* But I rose to the occasion, showered, ate a quick piece of toast, gathered my clubs, and headed out the door. It was about a five-minute drive to the golf course, so I had a little time to think about the day ahead. I hoped my swing would stay consistent and I hoped the day would be clear. Had they called for rain? I couldn't remember. No matter—it looked good so far. I always second-guessed my agreeing to go golfing as I almost always thought about the many others things I could be doing instead, or just nothing at all and vegging out on the couch. However, once I would arrive and get into the game, I always had a great time.

I pulled onto the course parking lot and found a place near the practice green. I put on my cleated golf shoes, got my clubs out of the trunk, and made my way to the clubhouse. Jerry was already there and driving a cart in my direction. "How about a lift?" I said.

"That's why I'm here," he said.

"Just drop me off by the clubhouse and I'll pay my fees." I said.

"Already done," he said.

"Jerry, you didn't need to do that." I said. But he replied that it was no problem and I could get the round the next time we played.

So off we went to the first tee box and waited for the foursome ahead of us. We talked about the dinner we had the other night and how much we enjoyed it, and then the conversation turned to work and some of the latest office politics buzzing around. Then it was our turn to tee off. Our game progressed pretty nicely even though the guys ahead of us were pretty slow. But it gave us time to continue talking about everything from our upbringing to our families and even the weather of late. But nothing about his earlier question—that is, until the end of our first nine.

As we finished and decided to take a break at the turn by heading into the clubhouse for some quick refreshments, he asked me, "Have you had a chance to think any more about my question the last time we played?"

"To tell you the truth, I just thought you were playing around." I said.

"Well, I'm not joking. I really want to know: If you could look into the next five years and change one thing, just one moment of your future, would you do it?" he said.

"Well, if you really want an answer, I guess I would have to say yes. I think anybody would take advantage of an opportunity like that."

"That's all I wanted to know," he said. We hopped in our golf cart and resumed our game. No more was said about it, so I guess he was just trying to make some interesting conversation. We finished our game just before noon and made our way to the parking lot, where we said our goodbyes and loaded up our cars.

As I drove home a little tired, I thought, *That was a fun time. Jerry and I have a lot in common. I'm glad I went. Even though he does have a bit of an odd side, he's okay.*

As I turned into the driveway I saw Mike mowing the front yard. I put the car in the garage and was removing my clubs from the trunk when he came around the corner of the garage onto the driveway and turned off the mower.

"How was your game, Dad?" he asked.

"Fine—I shot an 89." I said. "What prompted this sudden burst of energy to mow the lawn?" I was remembering last Saturday and expected a new pitch for some funds.

"Nothing really. I just got to thinking how you tell me that this place is mine too and I need to step up and help take care of it, so I had nothing else to do anyway, and here I am."

I smiled and thanked him, but inside I was probably feeling a little guilty about being proud of him. *I guess he listens sometimes after all*, I thought. I went inside and saw Sara at the sink doing some dishes.

“Did you see your oldest son out mowing the lawn this morning?” she asked.

“Yes,” I said with a smile. “I guess there may be some hope for the boy.”

“Aw, shush!” she said while smacking me with her dish towel. “How was your morning?”

“Great— really enjoyed myself. The weather was great, and I had a good game.”

“And how was Jerry?”

“He was okay. I think I kinda like the guy, but I have to tell you—he’s a little weird. I don’t mean that in a bad way—he’s just different. I think we’re going to be good friends.”

“Good,” she said, “because I think Cindy and I have really hit it off too. I invited her to my ladies’ Bible study this Tuesday night and I think she’s going to come. I really think the other ladies are going to love her. You know, maybe you should ask Jerry about coming to church some Sunday morning.”

“Now wait a minute. I just met the guy. I don’t want him to think that I’m cramming religion down his throat.”

“Okay, fine. I just think it would be nice to—”

I will,” I said as I cut her off. “Just let me do it when I think it’s the right time, okay?”

“Okay.”

I left the kitchen to grab a shower. That was probably our biggest area of disagreement. Sara was just really turned on to this whole religious thing. I think she would talk about it 24/7. But for me—well, I believed and all, and I

Bob Weaver

went to church every Sunday, but I was just kind of more casual about the whole thing, I guess.

What He's Talking About

Monday came and went. Tuesday morning came around, and it had been a busy one. About noon I heard someone say, "How about lunch downstairs in the cafeteria?" It was Jerry.

"Sure thing," I said.

"Give me about twenty minutes and I'll meet you downstairs."

"See you then," he said and left.

We met in the cafeteria, grabbed some sandwiches, and found a table over against the far wall. As we ate, he told me he had some information about the question he had asked me and wanted to lay it all out for me to see if I was interested.

"Go ahead if you don't mind me eating while you talk," I said.

"Fine with me," he said.

Jerry began to explain: "Back in 1953 the CIA began studying the mind and its abilities by using drugs such as LSD. It started out simple enough with just injection into soldiers, convicts, and mental patients. It produced some horrendous results and was eventually shut down ten years later as a result of a Congressional review. The CIA shredded or burned the files and everyone thought that was the end of it. But there had been some intriguing discoveries during the studies that went beyond the use of drugs. Those individuals with the backing of private funds went underground and continued experimenting with the mind. These guys didn't just inject folks with drugs to see what the mind was capable of. They also began looking for individuals with mental abilities who were already different than the normal ones whom they had worked with in the past—people with very high IQs and people with fractured minds who were severely limited in some areas but were off the charts in others, back then they were referred to as 'idiot savants.'

“Over the years their studies also moved into the other-worldly realm of spiritual things. Now, I’m not talking about going-to-church-on-Sunday-morning kind of stuff, but the weird voodoo kind of stuff, if you know what I mean. Anyway, they came across some folks who seemed to have the ability to actually see into the future. They were clairvoyant—I think that’s the term—but now they just call them ‘seers.’ And when they look into the future, they call that a ‘seeing.’

“So they took these original seers, and through years of experimentation and the use of drugs and some DNA slicing and dicing, they were able to extend the length of time they could see into the future and improve their accuracy. And the really neat part is that as they’re doing their ‘seeing,’ they hook you up to them and you can actually see what they’re seeing. We’re able to see just glimpses, a kind of a blurry motion picture. But you see what the seer is seeing, only not with 20/20 vision—but it’s still clear enough that you can make it out. The seeing is recorded on a computer and you’re able to review the highlights over a few days to determine what’s most important to you, then that event is time-stamped and that portion of the seeing is yours to keep and to change.”

“Well, how come I could change just one thing? Why couldn’t I change a *lot* of stuff?”

“Did you ever see the movie *The Butterfly Effect*?” I nodded. “Well, the folks behind all this are concerned about something called a ‘time line.’ They believe that time is fragile and the more you change it the bigger effect you can have—so they limit everyone to just one event.”

“What’s to keep a person from making several changes and just not telling them?”

“After you choose your event, then, through drugs and hypnosis, they will erase what you’ve seen and give you the computer recording of your one event.”

“Okay, now that’s got to be just about the wildest thing I’ve ever heard in my life.”

“I know it sounds crazy, but it’s the truth. I was skeptical too, but I checked it out and what I saw made me a believer. Why don’t you just look into it and decide for yourself? It’s worth a look, just on the chance it’s real. If not, you just say to yourself, ‘This guy’s nuts,’ and that’s the end of it. What have you got to lose?”

“Well, to be honest with you, I *already* think you’re a little nuts.”

He laughed and said, “Just think about it. Okay?”

I agreed and headed back toward my desk. I figured if I got myself involved in my work I could get my mind off our conversation. It was crazy thinking, like something out of a sci-fi movie, but as I said before, I like sci-fi stuff so it intrigued me. It really would be neat if you could look ahead and see some of the really big moments in your future. Knowing what they were going to be and when they were going to happen would have to be one of the most important pieces of information anyone could ever come across. I could only wish such a thing were true.

The possibilities raced through my mind like Indy 500 cars around the track. You could avoid making a big financial mistake or take advantage of a potential financial windfall that could set you up for the rest of your life. You could see an accident and avoid it, for that matter. You might see your own death or the death of someone important to you and avoid that too.

It was difficult to settle back to normal thinking and get back to work. I had to close my eyes and try to clear my mind of everything—it was hard to do. It seemed as if Jerry’s wacky possibility had a hold of me and didn’t want to let go.

Fortunately, though, after a while I was able to get back to the work I had been doing earlier. I was part of a team making a proposal for a rather significant contract to our company. For the last several years our IT division had been working on a new form of data transfer known as Li-Fi, which is similar to Wi-Fi, but instead of using radio waves it makes use of light waves and sends information about a hundred times as fast as Wi-Fi. It had been proven reliable and superior to other systems that were currently nearing or

already on the market. And the federal government was very interested in it. My job was to take the science and demonstrate how it could improve everyday communications, and with an extra layer of security, make it useful for more secure communications for those who have a higher level of clearance. It was exciting work but also very demanding on my time and energy levels. To help me with the latter, I really liked just being at home with my family for an opportunity to veg out and maybe play a few video games with my kids.

However, I couldn't get my mind around it or away from Jerry's idea.

A few hours later I was closing up shop and heading home. It was Sara's ladies' Bible study night, so dinner would be something light and quick and the kids and I would clean up. That night the kids and I watched an old movie together, but my mind was on my conversation with Jerry. I told myself it was a bunch of baloney, but still I was curious to hear some more about it. Maybe I could see about having lunch with him later this week and press him for some details. I still was not completely sure that he wasn't pulling my leg. The kids went to bed or to their rooms to talk with their friends by means of the latest app kids were using, and I must have dozed off on the couch. I was so sound asleep I didn't even hear Sara come in. She gave me a little nudge. "Don't scare me like that—I thought you were dead!" she said with concern on her face.

"Oh, sorry. I must have dozed off. How was your meeting?" I asked as I sat up.

"Wonderful! Cindy came and really enjoyed herself. She said she would come back next week."

"Oh, that's really neat." I said as I headed toward the bedroom. "Hey—I'm bushed. I think I'm going to turn in."

"I'll be up in a while. I need to wind down a little, so I'm going to read a bit."

I'm not sure what time Karen came to bed. I went right to sleep and started dreaming about looking into my future through some strange mixture of

science and mysticism. It was all kind of shaded but with a lot of different colors, and people kept popping up and disappearing. Goofy, I know, but that's what most of my dreams are like. I woke up around midnight still by myself in bed, which was weird. I wondered where Sara was, so I got up and went downstairs to check on her, expecting to find her asleep, but she was kneeling beside the couch and it sounded as if she were praying. I turned to go back upstairs, but she had heard me and asked if she had woken me up.

"No. I just woke up and you weren't there, so I came down to check on you. I'm sorry if I interrupted your praying."

"It's okay. I was just about done. It's just that my mind was on our meeting tonight and some things that were shared by some of the other ladies that burdened my heart, so I just felt like praying about their needs."

I am married to a wonderful woman, I thought, and then I told her, "Sara you are such a good person. You're so busy with me and the kids and work and yet you still have such a tender heart toward others."

"Thank you. I'll be up in a minute," she said. So I went back to bed and slept until the alarm went off at 6:15. Sara was beside me and this time she was the sleepyhead bemoaning where the night had gone and dreading having to get up.

"Just ten more minutes. And would you check on the kids to make sure they're up?"

So off I went knocking on the doors and telling the kids to rise and shine if they wanted any of my pancakes for breakfast. Like their mother, they all either acted like they didn't hear me or let out a distraught moan pleading for more time, but with my offer of pancakes and the threat of a glass of water being thrown in their face, they all made it to the table in time to eat. Now Sara usually took care of breakfast, but on those occasions when she wasn't up to it I pitched in with the only thing I knew how to make—pancakes. It was a simple-enough dish and no one complained. And even if they had, I would just suggest a little more syrup and that made everything okay. There was some small talk around the table. Mike was getting ready

for mid-terms, and the youth group at church had started planning a mid-winter retreat at a local ski lodge during Christmas break. Jimmy began teasing him about wanting to go only because of a girl from church.

“Hey, shut up,” Mike said to him.

“It’s true! You don’t even know *how* to ski,” Jimmy said, teasing his brother.

“Settle down, you two. Your mom was up late and she doesn’t need to come down here and hear you guys yelling at each other.” I told them.

“What’s wrong with Mom?” Jimmy asked.

“Not a thing,” Sara said as she walked into the kitchen. “Now what’s all the commotion? Did your dad burn the pancakes again?” she asked with a grin on her face.

“Ha, ha! Very funny. And when have I ever burned the pancakes?” They all laughed and I didn’t ask any more about it, not wanting to bruise my ego with actual proof. After a little more conversation, the boys headed off to catch their bus for school. As they opened the front door, I called to them, “Make sure you hurry home from school—I’m making pancakes!” They laughed as they closed the door behind them.

“So what was going on last night with you? Is everything okay?” I asked.

“Oh, sure.” she said. “It just seems that so many of the women in the Bible study group last night are going through some pretty rough times. Bob, I’m so thankful for you and the kids. We’re so blessed. I love you with all my heart. You’re a good man. You’re a wonderful husband to me, and our boys are a real joy to the both of us. I just can’t imagine life being any better than it is.”

“Yeah, me either. Things are really great. I’m lucky to have you and the boys.” Without breaking confidences or revealing names, Sara went on to share with me some of the prayer requests. I had to admit that a lot of families seemed to be struggling greatly with several issues, everything from financial struggles to marital and family strife, to physical needs, and the list

went on. Her eyes filled with tears as she mentioned different ones. I sat there and listened, admiring her compassion for others and her faith that through prayer and encouragement, things would get better for them.

I wasn't so sure, however. I believed in praying, but I also adhered to the old saying "God helps those who help themselves." And that thought was just enough to allow my thoughts to stray back to my conversation with Jerry. Could what he was talking about really be true? If it were, I could help our lives be even better than they were right now.

We finished breakfast and I left for the office. My mind was busy thinking more about all the possibilities Jerry's venture could mean to me and my family's future. Real or a joke, I was hooked, so I decided to pursue him and find out the truth once and for all. If it turned out to be a joke, I would say, "Let's stop talking about it and just be friends." If there were any truth to it, however, "Sign me up and let's do this thing."

Jerry was not in his office and his secretary said he had taken a couple of personal days for a family emergency, so I went to my section of the building and began working on some of the final details of a presentation I would have to make early next week. Try as I might, though, my mind kept drifting back to my new friend, Jerry, in part because I was wondering what his family emergency was, but mostly wondering when he would be back to work so I could ask him for more information and even proof about the original question to me. That question and his insistence about it had stirred up my thinking and it was difficult, to say the least, to steadily concentrate on anything else. The rest of the day went by at a snail's pace and I was glad when my workday was at an end.

On my way home, Sara called and asked me to stop by the grocery store to pick up some milk for breakfast in the morning, so I swung by the store and made my way to the dairy section, when I heard someone call out to me, "Hey, handsome!" The designation caught me off guard for a moment. I looked behind me, and it was the new pastor at our church. To tell you the truth, I could not remember his name, so I was glad to be able just to call him "Pastor."

"It's Bob, right?" he asked.

"Yes, it is," I said, a little embarrassed that I couldn't remember his name.

He looked at me, smiled, and said, "You'll have to forgive my calling you out as 'handsome' in a public place like this, but I wasn't sure it was you or even that I had put the right name to your face. Anyway, if it wasn't you, I didn't figure I would get into too much trouble calling someone 'handsome.'" We both laughed. "I saw your wife, Sara, the other day as she stopped by the church to drop off some clothes for the city mission and we got to talk a while. And then I met your oldest boy, Mike, last week during a youth meeting. You seem to have a wonderful family. I really look forward to getting to know you all a little better. If there's anything I can do for you, just let me know. It was good running in to you. Hope to see you Sunday." And with a wave he was off and down the aisle.

He seemed like a nice-enough guy. I remember the week he was introduced to our church as the new lead pastor. I had stood in the long line to greet him and his wife and kids. He was younger than our last pastor, who was moved to another church, and he seemed to get along with everyone so far. I tried to stay out of the inner workings of things going on there. I enjoyed it and went every week, but it was more Sara's thing than mine.

When Sara and I met in college, she let me know right away that she was a Christian and that church was an important part of her life, so I went along with her because I really liked her, and having been brought up without any religious training, I thought, *What could it hurt?* So we had been going to the same church even before we were married, and I believed my going had made me a better guy. I didn't drink or do drugs or cheat on my wife, and we had a pretty sweet life. So I was good with the whole church thing, but I was always kind of an observer, and when I was asked about teaching a class for young kids, I passed, but I did agree to stand at the door once a month with Sara and greet people. That was me performing my Christian duties, and I was happy there.

When I got home I told Sara about my encounter with the new pastor. She said she had a chance to talk to him a little last week and said that she and

the boys really liked him and that maybe we should invite his family over to dinner sometime.

“Hold on”, I said. “You’ve just been after me to make a new friend of Jerry. Don’t pile new things up on me. You know how I have trouble being around new people.”

“Ok,” she said. “I won’t push it now, but maybe sometime in the future. They really are nice.”

The next several days went by rather slowly as my team and I continued working on our presentation, the details of which really were stretching all of us. I was the team leader and that meant I had to at least have a working knowledge of all the parts of our presentation, even though the science of it all was above my pay grade, so to speak. To be sure we were ready meant some long days and even a couple of late nights, but by the end of the week we all agreed we were as ready as we could be. Saturday went by without much fanfare, and it was kind of nice, especially after such a busy week of preparation for next week’s presentation. I still hadn’t heard anything from Jerry, even though I had left him a couple of messages on his phone. Even though I was able to just veg out most of Saturday on the couch, between my work and my questions for him, my mind didn’t seem to slow down at all.

Jerry

Before I knew it, Sunday morning was here and Sara reminded me that we needed to get to church a little early as it was our turn to be greeters at the front door this week.

“Wow—it seems like we just did that,” I said.

“We did two weeks ago, but Sharon and Roger are out of town this week, so I told them we would switch Sundays with them, and they’ll take our place next time we’re up.”

“Okay, bring on the folks. I’m ready for them,” I said with a sarcastic grin on my face.

She acknowledged my facial expression and smiled back with that cute smile of hers that always melted my heart. Sunday mornings were always a tough time for me. I had to encourage the boys each step of the way and eventually that led to raising my voice in a manner that always reminded me of my father when he was trying to get me and my brothers ready to go somewhere. I didn’t like being like him, saying to myself, *I’m never going to treat my kids like he treated us. I’m going to be a better father than he was.* And for the most part I had succeeded, but Sundays were rough for me, especially when I would rather join them and just pull the covers over my head and sleep in on Sunday mornings. But by the time we all cleaned up kind of nice and everyone got into the car and headed out, I would say to myself, *It’s all for a good cause.* So off we went and I plastered a huge smile on my face whether I meant it was sincere or not.

It was a short drive to church, and we found a good place to park. We were a good bit early for the service since we had to greet folks that morning, so there were not too many cars in the parking lot. As we made our way into the building, we saw and waved at several others who are also there early to help out in preparation for the activities that morning. It was a festive time, and once I got there, I really did enjoy it. The folks were friendly and

the atmosphere had a kind of positive charge to it. We went to the greeters' table and picked up our name tags, which identified us as greeters, and a handful of bulletins to hand to folks coming in that morning.

Things were going pretty well with mostly regulars coming through the doors when Sara gave me a nudge and said, "Look who's coming." I looked up to see Cindy and Jerry Lirick walking across the parking lot and heading toward the front door. To say I was a little shocked was an understatement. Jerry was not known around the office for his Christian conduct, occasionally telling an off-color joke or quietly speaking to the other guys in a sexually derogatory way about some of our female coworkers, and he had even been written up once when one of them overheard what he said. At the moment I was a little embarrassed to be the guy greeting him at the church door, when even though I hadn't participated in his remarks, I would sometimes wave my hand in his direction and with a smile on my face tell him he had better watch his ways or they would get him into trouble. So we met at the front door, in this place where you're supposed to be a shining model of goodness and character—the sullied guy and the kind-of-clean-on-Sunday-morning guy.

"Well, look who's here," I said as I stretched out a hand of greeting.

"I'm as surprised as you are," he said. "Cindy and I have been talking and she said we should start going to church, and I guess Sara invited her—so here I am. Don't blame me if the roof caves in."

Sarah and Cindy laughed and I just smiled, hoping the roof *didn't* fall in. Sara decided to leave her post to show them around and help them to find a seat where we would join them later. I said goodbye and off they went. I wasn't sure what to think. I didn't mind coming to church here because no one I knew from my outside world of work or our neighborhood attended, so was as if I had this regular-guy life throughout the week and then I put on my church-guy on Sunday mornings. I never considered that the two would ever necessarily meet, so this was new territory for me and I was always uncomfortable with new things.

When Sara came back to the door she was all excited about Jerry and Cindy being there.

“How did all this come about?” I asked her.

“Well, you remember a couple of weeks ago when I said there were several women in my Bible study who were going through some rough times?”

“Yes.”

“Cindy was one of them. She and Jerry had been having trouble with his ex-wife over his kids and I told her I would pray about it with her—and out of the blue his ex called last week and said they could take the kids for a couple of days last week on a brief getaway because she needed a break from them.”

“Oh, so that explains where Jerry ran off to then. He’s been away from work for the last couple of days and I was wondering what was going on.”

“Anyway, I invited them to come sometime, and here they are. Isn’t that great?”

“Great,” I said unenthusiastically.

“I invited them to go to lunch with us afterwards, okay?”

“Fine,” I said, but inside I thought, *I don’t know how I feel about Jerry going to the same church I go to. I sure hope nothing weird happens during the service that makes him think I’m weird for going here.* Nothing out of the ordinary happened, and I actually thought the music and the preaching were pretty good, so that made me feel a little better, and after church we went to lunch. After we were seated and ordered our meals, Jerry leaned over to me and apologized for not returning my calls. He explained that he and Cindy had had a chance to take his kids for a couple of days and that he had been really busy with them.

“No problem,” I said. “Sara explained it to me and I hope things went well.”

“They did. Better than I expected. Cindy is convinced it’s because she prayed or something. That’s why we came today. You know what they say—happy wife, happy life.”

I could tell by the way he talked and from his mannerisms that he put no stock in it being the result of anybody’s praying and that he was there just to make her happy. My initial reaction was *Shame on you, Jerry*, and then I heard a little voice in my head say to me, *Isn’t that why you’re here?*

After lunch, Sara and Cindy were all hugs and tears, both convinced that their prayers had been answered. Jerry and I just went along with it, shook hands, and said our goodbyes. On the way home Sara was aglow and the kids asked her why she was so happy.

“I just enjoyed church this morning and then seeing me and your dad’s new friends come—well, that just made it extra special.”

“Where did you meet them?” Mike asked.

She told them how I knew Jerry from work and that we had won a prize while golfing and that we had gone out to dinner together, that Cindy had come to her women’s Bible study group and she had invited them to church.

“Wow—that’s pretty cool!” Jimmy said.

“Yeah, that *is* pretty cool, Dad. I didn’t know you were good enough at golf to win *anything*,” Mike said, taking a dig at his dad.

“Hey, I’ll have you know I’ve won plenty of things in my lifetime.”

“Okay, name one!” he shot back to me.

I thought for a moment and then said to him, “I won your mom’s heart,” while taking a quick look in her direction. They all laughed and Sara gave me one of her playful smiles while squeezing my hand. I had to agree with her. It was a good day.

Growing up in a pretty dysfunctional family, I really did consider our lives above average in the blessings department. But as I was always wanting just

a little more, my mind kept moving back to Jerry. What I really would have liked was to have had lunch with just him and me so I could tell him that I wanted to move ahead with getting more information about what he was saying about looking into my future. But short of calling him later that day, I would just have to wait until our next day at work. The rest of our Sunday went by rather quickly as we settled into our usual routine, which included a nap, popping some popcorn, and watching a couple of movies.



If you could look five years into the future and change one thing would you be interested? Would you believe what you saw? Would you act on your new found knowledge? It could put you at a great advantage, or you could really mess things up.

A Moment in Time

by Bob Weaver

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